



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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Commercial Harvest of Shallow-Water Grouper Closing to Vessels Fishing in the South Atlantic Federal Waters on October 20, 2012

The commercial harvest of shallow-water grouper in federal waters of the South Atlantic from North Carolina to Key West, Florida, will be **closed, effective 12:01 a.m. (local time), October 20, 2012**, through the remainder of the 2012 fishing year. A seasonal closure is in place for shallow-water grouper from January 1 until May 1. Therefore, **commercial harvest of shallow-water grouper will not reopen until May 1, 2013.**

The commercial annual catch limit for gag is 352,940 pounds. When the commercial annual catch limit for gag is met, NOAA Fisheries is required to close commercial harvest of all shallow-water grouper in the South Atlantic waters. Species included in the shallow-water grouper complex are gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, red hind, rock hind, yellowmouth grouper, yellowfin grouper, graysby, and coney.

The operator of a vessel that has been issued a federal commercial permit for snapper-grouper and that is landing shallow-water grouper for sale must have landed and bartered, traded, or sold such shallow-water grouper prior to 12:01 a.m., local time, October 20, 2012. The prohibition on sale or purchase does not apply to sale or purchase of shallow-water grouper that were harvested, landed

ashore, and sold prior to 12:01 a.m., local time, October 20, 2012, and were held in cold storage by a dealer or processor.

Recreational Sector:

The recreational sector will remain open until January 1, 2013. All harvest and possession of shallow-water grouper in or from closed federal waters of the South Atlantic is subject to the applicable bag and possession limits, and the sale or purchase of shallow-water grouper taken from closed federal waters is prohibited. In addition, those bag and possession limits, and the prohibition on sale or purchase, apply in state and federal waters of the South Atlantic for a vessel for which a valid federal commercial or charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued.

A seasonal closure is in place for shallow-water grouper from January 1 until May 1, therefore **both recreational and commercial sectors will be closed from January 1 until May 1, 2013.**

For additional information please visit the [Gag and Shallow Water Grouper Commercial Closure Frequently Asked Questions](#).